

POTASSIUM

TO YOUR HEALTH - PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

WHAT IS IT

Potassium is a major mineral which is necessary for vital body functions. Potassium is the third most abundant element in the body after calcium and phosphorus.

WHAT DOES IT DO

This mineral, like sodium, performs as an "electrolyte", carrying a tiny electrical charge that governs muscle functioning, including that of the heart. Potassium aids in the transmission of nerve impulses, release of insulin, proper functioning of digestive enzymes, blood pressure regulation, and helps maintain a delicate fluid balance inside and outside the cells. A potassium imbalance can shut down the heart instantly. High potassium intake has been linked to lower blood pressure levels and reduced risk of a stroke.

HOW MUCH DOES THE BODY NEED

The minimum potassium requirement for adults is 2,000 milligram per day which could be met by consuming one cup of orange juice (550mg), 1 cup of milk (418mg), 1 cup all bran cereal (700mg), and 1 banana (45mg).

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF DEFICIENCY

Symptoms include muscle weakness, muscle cramps and spasms, loss of appetite, constipation, irregular heartbeat, drowsiness, and irritability.

WHO MAY BE DEFICIENT?

Diets of North Americans supply enough potassium if a variety of foods are eaten; therefore, dietary deficiency does not ordinarily occur. If it does, it is usually found in women who do not meet their caloric needs or in persons with certain eating disorders. Unusual potassium losses, through prolonged sweating, vomiting, and/or diarrhea, can trigger a deficiency. In addition, certain drugs may deplete potassium from the body such as diuretics and laxatives. There are also factors that may block potassium absorption; for example, alcoholism and magnesium deficiency.

FOODS HIGH IN POTASSIUM

Spinach 1/2 cup boiled = 419mg
Lima beans 1/2 cup canned = 354mg
Zucchini squash 1/2 cup = 228mg
Asparagus 1/2 cup boiled = 144
Winter squash 1/2 cup = 448mg
Cantaloupe 1 cup = 482mg
Orange juice 1 cup = 550mg
Potato, baked with skin = 844mg
Avocados 1 medium = 1,097
Mushrooms 1 cup fresh, raw = 259
Mushrooms 1/2 cup canned = 101mg
Brewer's yeast 1oz = 537
Nonfat dry milk 1/4 cup = 290mg
Dried apricots and peaches 1 cup = 1,567 - 1,791mg
Wheat germ 1/2 cup = 513
Raisins 1/4 cup = 310mg
Almonds 1oz dried = 213mg
Pork 3oz = 387mg
Pinto beans 3-1/2oz boiled = 646mg
Bananas 1 medium = 467
Kidney beans 1/2 cup = 429
Milk 1 cup = 418mg
Prunes dried 1/4 cup = 317mg
Turkey 3oz = 255mg
Beef 3oz = 240mg
Chicken 3oz = 220mg
Yogurt 8oz = 579mg

Salt substitutes are often high in potassium, so read labels if you need to limit potassium intake. Processing, canning, or freezing foods reduces potassium. Because potassium in food occurs in soluble form (dissolve in water), considerable amounts may be lost in water when cooking vegetables and fruits. The best ways to preserve potassium in vegetables are to prepare them whole by baking, steaming, or sauteing.

Call the Wellness Center for more nutrition information at (618)536-4441.

Student Health Center



WWW.SIU.EDU/~SHC

This information is for educational purposes only. Consult your doctor for specific medical advice, diagnosis and treatment.

618-453-3311

Dial-A-Nurse is available after-hours until 10:30 p.m. during fall and spring semesters. In case of emergency dial 911.